

Limited editions may mean limited value

By Roger Boye

This week's column answers more questions about old coins.

Q—An ad for an East Coast company promises that its new silver medallion will be a "limited edition" with no more than 50,000 sold worldwide. Does that offering have a better profit potential than an "unlimited edition"?

T.O., Chicago

A—Not necessarily. Many collectors lose money on privately issued medallions—limited or unlimited—because few people normally want to buy such items on the resale market. In other words, 50,000 is a huge mintage if the potential market is less than 10,000.

Q—How much would I get for an 1813 large U.S. penny with a hole in the middle? The design is quite clear.

P.L., Cicero

A—Probably less than \$1 because holed or gouged coins are in little demand on the hobby market. An unmarred 1813 cent usually goes for \$30 and up, depending on the sharpness of the design and other factors.

Q—How much are 1943 "silver cents" worth now? I've got 80 of them.

B.N., Dolton

A—Circulated specimens retail for from 5 to 50 cents each. The coins were made with zinc-coated steel, not silver; Uncle Sam used all available copper that year to build weapons for World War II.

Q—We got a 1972 silver penny in change. Have we struck it rich?

H.N., Decatur

A—Hardly. Someone probably painted your coin or treated it with a chemical. As such, it would have no value to a collector.

Q—Have Carson City silver dollars sold by the government years ago gone up in value?

G.S., Downers Grove

A—Definitely, with the amount depending on date and condition. For example, uncirculated specimens of the 1882, 1883 and 1884 dollars retail for at least \$100 while other years bring even more.

Q—We own proof sets from 1973 and 1974. Have they been a good investment?

S.D., Dubuque, Ia.

A—No. Most U.S. proof sets issued during the last 20 years have performed poorly on the hobby market. Your items retail today for about \$7 each, their original issue prices.

● Questions about old coins or paper money? Send your queries to Roger Boye, Tribune Books, Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want a personal reply and allow at least three weeks for the answer.